

A STUDY OF THE COOPERATION BETWEEN A PUBLIC AND A PRIVATE AGENCY
IN ESTABLISHING AND OPERATING A COMMUNITY CENTER
IN A PUBLIC HOUSING PROJECT

A THESIS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
Significance.....	1
Purpose.....	3
Scope and Limitation.....	3
Method of Procedure.....	3
II. ARMOUR SQUARE.....	5
Population and Housing.....	5
Economic and Industrial Scene.....	6
Wentworth Garden Homes Neighborhood.....	6
III. DEVELOPMENT OF A COMMUNITY CENTER.....	10
Presentation of Problem.....	11
Initial Steps in Planning for the Center.....	12
Steps in Cooperation.....	15
IV. ORGANIZATION OF THE COMMUNITY CENTER.....	18
Administration: Structure.....	18
Joint Administration of Facilities.....	19
Finance.....	20
Program.....	21
Staff.....	23
V. THE FIRST YEAR OF FUNCTIONING.....	25
Problems Faced.....	25
Residents' Reaction to Program.....	27
How Problems Were Met.....	29
VI. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS.....	33
APPENDIX.....	36
Schedule.....	37
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	38

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. Structure of Wentworth Neighborhood Center in Relation to Grace Community Center.....	24

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Significance

The Federal Housing Act of 1937 made possible the erection of many housing projects throughout the nation. These projects were built for the prime purpose of alleviating the pressure created by the national housing crisis, with particular emphasis on slum clearance. Years of experience has led to an expansion of concepts in the housing program. Housing authorities, along with social workers and others in fields related to health and welfare, recognize that adequate housing facilities do not supply the total answer to human well being. Increasing emphasis is being placed on "community relations" in housing developments. Concrete evidence of this was seen in the formation of a joint committee on Housing and Welfare. This committee, formed in 1943 to facilitate better working relations among housing authorities and community agencies, was composed of representatives on the national level from both private and public agencies.

In 1946 this committee submitted a report which stated the accepted responsibilities for community activities of both groups. A basic concept of joint responsibility was made clear in this statement:

The principal function of a local housing project is to administer housing. The various community agencies--public and voluntary--constitute the community's pattern for meeting its health, education, recreation, welfare, and other needs. It follows that the housing authority and these community agencies are jointly responsible for developing public housing as an integral part of the total community.¹

¹ The Joint Committee on Housing and Welfare, Community Services and Public Housing (Chicago, 1947), p. 1.

The establishment of a community center in a housing project as an extension program of an established private agency utilized the basic concept discussed here. A study of the establishment of the Wentworth Neighborhood Center should serve to benefit the existing program and the agencies involved, agencies interested in similar programs, and the field of social work as a whole.

Housing developments are responsible for the concentration of a large number of people in a given area. On one hand, a housing development, through its tenants' organization, may conduct successful programs of interest to its population, and so enable integration of persons within the area. On the other hand, a housing development may be disintegrated, having no evidence of co-ordinating activities. Whatever the situation, it is the concern of the social worker. Specifically, case-workers and recreation workers have contributed to the housing program by assisting in tenant selection and by conducting recreation programs. The 1949 Housing Act which made a definite housing policy for the nation will very likely result in increase in housing developments. Corollary to the increase in housing developments, which are merely physical plants or structures, will be the concern for the needs of those who will occupy them.

Social workers have gone on record as a group supporting legislation for action on improvement of living conditions of people. The Federal Housing Act of 1949 is law. Social workers must now apply their "follow-up" technique by working together with their local representative of the Housing Authority. This study was concerned with a social agency which attempted to apply that technique.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was threefold: (1) to define and illustrate the steps taken to establish the community center so that interested agencies may share in the knowledge; (2) to evaluate the type of cooperation to determine its values in meeting the needs of the residents of the project; (3) to analyze the reaction of the residents toward the program through their participation in the program and their attitudes toward assuming responsibility for it.

Scope and Limitation

This study considered the area known as Wentworth Garden Homes, a housing project located in the southernmost part of Community Area 34 (Armour Square) in the city of Chicago, Illinois. The project housed four hundred twenty-two families, twenty-two of which were interviewed in an attempt to determine generally their knowledge of and attitude toward the community center.

The community center had been in operation a little over a year before this study was made. This, along with the fact that this type of extension service is still in its infancy, contributed to the existence of limited written material on the subject. The findings of the small sample is not considered representative of the project community; however, some pertinent factors may evolve which may prove useful to those continuing with the program.

Method of Procedure

In order to obtain a comprehensive account of the establishment of the community center, interviews were held with members of the initial

planning committee, some of whom are still with the program; personnel of the agencies, Wentworth Neighborhood Center and Grace Community Center; representatives of the Chicago Housing Authority and of the Welfare Council of Metropolitan Chicago. Further interviews were held with residents of the housing project in the attempt to ascertain their general knowledge of and reaction toward the center's program.

In selecting the sample for interviews with residents, a complete list of families of the project was secured from the office of Management. Every seventeenth family was taken from the list of four hundred twenty-two families making a selection of twenty-four families to be interviewed. All interviews with the exception of one were held in the homes of residents, the one interview being held in the community center. The interviews were generally from five to thirty minutes long.

Supplementary information such as population and housing statistics were obtained from the files of agencies participating in the program.

CHAPTER II

ARMOUR SQUARE

Population and Housing

Health and Welfare resources of Metropolitan Chicago were studied in relation to its seventy-five community areas. This breakdown into areas facilitated a systematic approach for study of the entire city. Wentworth Garden Homes, a housing project, was located in the southernmost part of Area 34, Armour Square.

Armour Square was bounded on the north by West 18th Street; on the West by West 24th and West 28th Streets, Wallace and Stewart Avenues; on the south by Pershing Road; on the east by Federal Street. It's size was .6724 square miles. The total population in 1940 was 18,472. Of these, the native white made up 53.1 per cent, Negroes 22 per cent, foreign born whites 20 per cent, other races 4.8 per cent.¹ A survey of the area's 5,179 dwelling units resulted in its being classified as a blighted area. Of the dwellings surveyed, 712 were in good condition, 3,038 were in need of minor repairs, 1,347 were in need of major repairs, 100 were unfit for use.² Since age and physical condition were bases for classification, those areas were considered blighted where a majority of the buildings were fifty or more years old, and where 20 per cent of the buildings were in need of major repairs.

¹

Louis Wirth and Eleanor H. Berhert, The Local Community Fact Book of Chicago (Chicago, 1949).

²

Chicago Plan Commission and Works Project Administration, Residential Chicago, A report sponsored by the City of Chicago (June, 1942), Armour Square.

Economic and Industrial Scene

The area was characterized by its heterogeneous population and its sub-standard housing. Further investigation revealed its industrial and commercial nature. The area's northern boundary, located just outside the "Loop" or business district of the city, made possible the existence of many factories throughout the area. Again, the Pennsylvania Railroad lines on the west and New York Railroad lines on the east enhanced, further, a commercial tone. Commercial recreation was represented also by the presence of the Chicago White Sox's Comiskey Park. Sociologically the area was located in the second and third circles of the city as set forth by Burgess in his theory of Concentric Circles.¹ Thus, an area of sub-standard housing, composed of a homogeneous population in which business is the all important factor. Indeed then, an industry-centered area. An observation of the health and welfare resources indicated the same.

The area contained two parks operated by the Chicago Park District, a branch of the Chicago Public Library, and three elementary schools. These were the only recognized agencies of health and welfare which emphasized any type of recreation activities. Wentworth Garden Homes was located in the southern end of the area. The Wentworth Homes Neighborhood was the focus of this study.

Wentworth Garden Homes Neighborhood

The boundaries for the neighborhood were: 35th Street on the north, Princeton Avenue on the west, 41st Street on the south, and State Street on the east. Not unlike the larger area of which it was a part, it was

¹

Ernest W. Burgess and Robert E. Park, The City (Chicago, 1925), p. 50.

exposed to factories and the commercial impacts of the district. Pershing Road or 39th Street depicted the busy thoroughfare for huge freight trucks and capacity-filled street cars conveying goods and workers to and from sources of industry.

There were two elementary schools located within the neighborhood. One school, located on Wells Avenue and 37th Street was a part of the Board of Education system of that city; the other, a parochial school directed by St. George Catholic Church, was located on Wentworth Avenue near 39th Street. Wendell Phillips High School located a short distance away from the neighborhood served those children of high school age. They were the only recognized agencies of health and welfare in the neighborhood.

The erection of a housing project in the area made possible the westward expansion of Negroes from the densely populated adjacent area. As Negroes moved into the project, the white population moved away; hence when this study was made, the area was totally populated by Negroes. Persons living in this area were quite some distance from the recreation facilities discussed. The business and industry emphasis of the area accounted for its dearth of health and welfare services. It was an area of "unmet needs."¹

Human beings, nevertheless, were forced to live in the area, and those concerned with alleviating social ills must take concrete steps to provide more of a balanced life for them. Elton Mayo stated:

Economic theory in its human aspect is woefully insufficient; indeed it is absurd. Humanity is not adequately described as a horde of individuals, each fighting his neighbor for the scarce material of survival.²

¹ Luch P. Carner and Robert L. Neal, "Planning for the Extension of Recreation," (Welfare Council of Metropolitan Chicago, 1950), p. 7. (Mimeographed.)

² Elton Mayo, Social Problems of an Industrial Civilization (Boston, 1945), p. 59.

The area discussed being industry-centered projected on to its inhabitants that "economic theory." Individuals were seen only in the light of their being mere cogs in the wheel of industry with no concern for the individual as a human being with needs for social and spiritual development.

Increasing is the consciousness of the impacts made on man by his highly technological and now, atomic society. It has been established that the natural sciences have made rapid strides while sciences dealing with the study of human beings have lagged behind. Continued global conflicts and the overwhelming increase of individual "psychoses" have aroused tremendous concern for the bridging of the gap between the two. Franz Alexander, in his book Our Age of Unreason, discussed the subject rather thoroughly and advanced valuable theories which may assist in bridging the gap.¹ Burgess and Park have made immeasurable contributions through their works in studying the effects of the urban society and modern civilization on man. Elton Mayo, this time in a positive form, stated: "Even though progress may be slow, the way is open for us to learn how to handle with success the social problems posed by an adaptive industrial civilization."²

It is the hope that our society will become more individual-centered to the end that each individual upon living a more satisfactory life may be able to contribute his best to his community and the world. Man needs more than an occupation and a house to live in. Man needs "to experience personal achievement, social fellowship, and a conviction of belonging to

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See Franz Alexander, Our Age of Unreason (New York, 1942).

2

Elton Mayo, op. cit., p. 112.

groups whose activities give purpose to life."¹ Adequate recreation will help to perpetuate man's personal achievement, social fellowship and his sense of belonging.

¹
Charles M. Harsh and H. C. Schrickel, Personality Development and Assessment (New York, 1950), p. 469.

CHAPTER III

DEVELOPMENT OF A COMMUNITY CENTER

...recreation is not a minor incident of a good community, but a vital element of social well being.¹

Early in 1947 the Wentworth Garden Homes were completed and opened for occupancy. This produced an increase in the population of the area, especially children. The entrance of one thousand three hundred children under eighteen years of age was definitely attributed to the project.² One of the buildings of the project was called the Children's Building. As suggested by the name, the building was designed to house some type of children's program. This building became the Community Building in which activities for both children and adults were conducted.

The Community Building of Wentworth Garden Homes was at one time the scene of recreation activities supervised by a Recreation Director, an employee of the Chicago Housing Authority. Those activities were short-lived. A change in national policy resulted in the removal of the Recreation Director to a larger project of the city. The new policy made it impossible for projects the size of Wentworth to have Recreation Supervisors. The project was then left without any form of recreation program. The local management presented the problem to the Residents' Council of the project.

Residents' or Tenants' Councils are organizations initiated by Housing Managements to provide an opportunity for residents to develop commun-

1

Arthur E. Morgan, The Small Community (New York, 1942), pp. 216-17.

2

Annual Report of Wentworth Neighborhood Center (Chicago, 1950), p. 1

ity activities throughout the project community and the community-at-large. The Residents' Council of Wentworth Garden Homes was composed of two representatives from each of the seven districts of the project. The district captain and another representative, elected by district members, made up the Council. The prime function of this body was to convey the opinions of residents to management and similarly interpret to residents the program and goals of housing. In this way it served as a channel between residents and management with chief concern for healthy relationship between the two.

Presentation of Problem

In March of 1947, the Manager of Wentworth Garden Homes brought to the attention of the Residents' Council of the project the need for some type of recreation program, a situation made acute by the removal of the Recreation Director. Residents agreed that recreation was a great need of the community, and after the matter was discussed, the Council agreed to accept the responsibility for providing that service.

For some months the Council conducted activities which included dances for teen-agers, some children's parties, and the operation of a canteen. These activities were sporadic and did not seem to meet the need fully. Management felt that these programs were evidences of a fuller program that might be obtained with the help of other agencies in the community. With this in mind, the Management reopened for discussion with the Residents' Council the need for recreation in the project community.

The Council evaluated their work and agreed that a fuller program would be desirable if it were possible. Both Council members and Management recognized the limitations of the Council in conducting the recreation program. Time available for planning and executing the program proved

a real problem. At that point the Manager informed the Council that it might be able to secure the extended services of an already established re-reaction agency. The Council considered the suggestion a good one, but felt that they needed to know more about the plan. The Manager described to the Council the functioning of the Welfare Council of Chicago and told them that consultants from that Council might be called upon to assist them in their particular problem. The Residents' Council decided to have the consultants called in for their next meeting. Thereupon, the Welfare Council of Metropolitan Chicago was called upon for guidance.¹

Initial Steps in Planning for the Center

The Welfare Council of Metropolitan Chicago, the coordinating body or clearing house of social agencies in that city had as its general purpose, "to promote and carry on effective planning to meet health and welfare needs, improve facilities and help eliminate conditions that result in those needs."² The Council was composed of divisions which served various fields of the social work practice. The division under which this request fell was the division of Education and Recreation; extension of recreation services was a function of that division. Two consultants, one from the division of Education and Recreation, and one from the division of Area Planning, interpreted the function of the welfare council to the Residents' Council of Wentworth Garden Homes. Likewise, the program of several Recreation and Group Work agencies were outlined by the consultants.

¹

Interview with Walter Payne (Former Manager of Wentworth Garden Homes. Present Manager, Dearborn Homes, Chicago, Illinois, February 5, 1951).

²

Service Report of the Welfare Council for the Year Ending 1950 (Chicago), p. 4. (Mimeographed.)

In interpreting the function of the Welfare Council to the Residents' Council, the consultants discussed the goals of the Welfare Council in serving the unmet needs. They indicated further that the area about which the Council was concerned was classified as an unserved area, and that the Welfare Council would assist in any effort to improve the general well-being of the community. Consultants cautioned the Council, as persons living in a housing project, from becoming an "isolated island" unto themselves. In the consideration of problems at hand, the general community must be included. Hence, if a community center was established it would have to serve the total community and not only the people of the project.

The planning of health and welfare services should include all people who have need of services offered. People living in housing projects very often become set-off from the community of which they are a part. There were hostilities between groups from the project and groups from the community at large.¹ Many factors contributed to the existence of such feelings. In some cases persons forced to evacuate their homes for the erection of a project were never able to return. As a result new people moved into the area. Again, those who were not forced to move, accepted with reluctance the invasion of a new group. Persons living in housing projects are faced with problems which are not shared by their community neighbors. A gap in relationship exists from the offset; and plans to integrate persons living in the project with those of the community should begin as soon as the project is ready for occupancy.

1

Interview with Frank Adair (Former Manager of Wentworth Garden Homes, Manager Cabrini Homes, Chicago, Illinois, February 7, 1951).

The Residents' Council, having received the information from the consultants, agreed to begin negotiations for establishing a community center for the people of the neighborhood. Representatives of the Council were selected and authorized to visit several agencies in the vicinity that their program might be observed. The committee presented their findings at the next Council meeting. The findings disclosed that Grace Community Center, an agency which emphasized recreation for the family as a unit, was the agency of which they would like the extended services.

Discussion which ensued was concerned with the future functioning of the Residents' Council and other established groups in the project. Some members felt that the community center's functioning would usurp other established groups. Other members felt that if a clear picture of what the Council had in mind was presented to the Grace Community Center's authorities, there would be no need for concern. There remained some dissenters; however, the majority agreed upon asking the Center if it could extend its services. Authorized by the Council, the Manager wrote a letter to the Director of Grace Community Center requesting the extended services of their agency.

Grace Community Center is located approximately a mile east of Wentworth Garden Homes. The Director presented the request to the Board of Directors who in turn referred the request to the Extension Board of the Presbyterian Church which is the highest body responsible for Grace Community Center. The Board, upon analysis of the request and upon being informed of the part already played by the Welfare Council and Chicago Housing Authority, accepted the challenge. The Presbyterian Extension Board gave the Director of Grace the authority to work with the plan. It also

appointed members from the Board of Directors of Grace Center and from its own Board to the planning committee.

Steps in Cooperation

Step 1 - Negotiation.--The Manager of Wentworth Garden Homes authorized by the Chicago Housing Authority presented to the Welfare Council the need for recreation services within the Project Community. In doing so, a principle set forth by the joint committee of Housing and Welfare was enacted. The principle stated the responsibility of the housing project as follows: "The housing authority brings to the attention of the agency information about social needs and community problems related to the housing development."¹ Similarly, the Welfare Council through its discussion with the Residents' Council, performed the ideals of the same principle but from the point of view of the coordinating agency. Conversely, then, the responsibility of the coordinating agency to the housing authority read:

The coordinating agency assists the authority in understanding objectives, policies and programs of community agencies.

...Gives sympathetic attention to the needs and problems reported by the authority and applies its resources in helping to deal with them.²

Step 2 - Education and Planning.--Consultants from the Welfare Council, through their interpretation of the function and services of the Welfare Council, enabled the Residents' Council in planning for the development of their community center. The Residents' Council delegated a committee to observe the programs of various agencies within the vicinity. An

¹

Joint Committee on Housing and Welfare, Community Services and Public Housing (Chicago, 1947), p. 8.

²

Ibid.

agency was selected and upon the Residents' Council's request was asked to extend its services to the Wentworth Gardens Homes community. The agency agreed to comply with the request.

Keeping in mind the fact that if established, the community center would have to serve persons of the total community as well as those living in the project, the Residents' Council invited certain people of the wider community to join them in their effort. This led to the formation of the Wentworth Activities Committee which was composed of representatives from the Chicago Housing Authority, the Residents' Council, the extension board of the Presbyterian Church, Grace Community Center, and persons of the Community and the Welfare Council. The function of this committee was that of continuing plans for securing the community center.

Step 3 - Interpretation.--Since the removal of the Recreation Director, the Residents' Council was the group responsible for program activities in the Community Building. This group also had frequent access to the building. With the enactment of a new program, how then would the council function? The Director of Grace Community Center gave council members a resume' of the program that would be conducted and also stated that Grace Community Center proposed to work with them in serving the needs of the community. It was understood that those groups who previously used the Center would continue to do so; however, a recognition of the new program was necessary. Council members participated in working out that agreement.

Step 4 - Organization.--In clear and concise terms the agreement between Chicago Housing Authority and Grace Community Center was drawn up. Legal formalities were waived in that instance; however, each agency had in its files a copy of the agreement which seemed highly respected. Issues

directly discussed were: administration of facilities, program, administration and budget, adjustment and dissolution. The policies and procedures concerning these were mutually agreed upon.¹

The Wentworth Activities Committee had a budget worked out for presentation before the Community Fund Hearing Committee. The first presentation before the Committee rendered no financial assistance as the request was made in mid-year when all funds were appropriated. This caused a set-back in the project. The Community Fund Committee was convinced of the need; however, no funds were possible at the time. At a later date the plan was presented once again, and an appropriation was made.²

Step 5 - Action.--A Committee on By-Laws was appointed to form the policies and practices of the forthcoming agency or Community Center. The committee submitted a report, the recommendations of which were adopted. A Board of Directors was formed and on November 9, 1949, the community center was opened to serve the community.

1

Interview with Robert Neal (Associate Executive Secretary, Division of Education and Recreation, Welfare Council of Chicago, Illinois, January, 7, 1951).

2

Wentworth Activities Committee Minutes (Chicago, August 1, 1949), p. 1. (Mimeographed.)

CHAPTER IV

ORGANIZATION OF THE COMMUNITY CENTER

Administration

On November 9, 1949, Wentworth Neighborhood Center opened its doors for service to its community. The preamble to its by-laws read:

Wentworth Neighborhood Center was founded by Grace Community Center Board of Directors and Chicago Housing Authority out of the Authority's desire to make maximum use of its community facilities for the general welfare of the total community, the interest of the tenants in helping to support such a program, and the willingness of Grace Community Center to extend its services to this community. It will operate as a branch of Grace Community Center in the community facilities of Wentworth Graden Homes, Chicago Housing Authority, 3770 Wentworth Avenue.¹

The purpose of the organization was to provide a medium through which the people of the community might pool their physical and mental resources for the entire well-being of the community by enabling development of the social, cultural, and spiritual life of its individuals in cooperation with other related agencies.²

Structure.--The Center was administered by a Committee of Management which was responsible to the Grace Community Center Board of Directors. This committee was an outgrowth of the Wentworth Activities Committee. Inherent in this committee's functioning were the same principles of the Wentworth Activities Committee. Membership was composed of seven persons from Wentworth Garden Homes, three of whom shall be members of the Executive Committee of the Residents' Council; seven persons from the area surrounding the housing development and the community-at-large; three persons

¹ Committee on By-Laws, "By-Laws of Wentworth Neighborhood Center," (Chicago, 1949), p. 1.

² Ibid.

from Grace Community Center Board of Directors; two persons from the Chicago Housing Authority, ex-officio; two persons from the Presbyterian Church Extension Board, ex-officio. This ratio was to be observed in case of any adjustments.

Members representing the Housing Community were to be nominated by the Executive Board of Residents' Council and selected by the Board of Directors of Grace Community Center. Members who represented the neighborhood and the community-at-large were to be nominated by any duly authorized or ex-officio member of the Committee of Management, and would be elected by the Board of Directors of Grace Community Center. Members who were to represent Grace's Board of Directors were selected by that Board. Members who were to represent Chicago Housing Authority were to be nominated by the Housing Manager and elected by the Board of Directors of Grace Community Center.¹

Joint Administration of Facilities

Both Chicago Housing Authority and Grace Community Center agreed that for the maximum value of the relationship, a body of principles was necessary as a working basis. Hence, the specific agreement for administration facilities were as follows:

1. The Chicago Housing Authority, in the interest of providing the best services for its tenants and the community as a whole, agrees that one agency, private or public, should accept the responsibility for the administration of the entire community service program. The Authority agrees that the agency should administer the community building, playgrounds, basements and other such space as is set aside for community purposes.

1

Committee on By-Laws, "By-Laws of Wentworth Neighborhood Center," (Chicago, 1949), p. 2.

2. The Chicago Housing Authority shall agree to supply in addition to physical or real properties all light, heat, water and janitorial services and other expendable equipment.
3. The agency shall agree to provide competent supervision and skilled leadership and designate at least one full-time staff member who shall have responsibility for building and supervising a community activities program and in scheduling all programs involving the use of community facilities.
4. The agency shall agree to exercise the same judgment and care of properties and facilities of the Chicago Housing Authority as it does of its own in its central place of operations.
5. Both the Chicago Housing Authority and the agency shall agree that all facilities will be used for all residents of the housing community and adjacent areas regardless of race, nationality or religious convictions.
6. Both the Chicago Housing Authority and the agency shall agree that neither shall have the right to rent community facilities for the purpose of income-making revenue.¹

Finance

The Wentworth Neighborhood Center was a member of the Community Fund of Chicago. This required an additional fifty per cent or more of the budget to be raised by the agency itself. It was therefore agreed by both Chicago Housing Authority and Grace Community Center that the Center should have the right to hold drives and any other "legitimate" fund-raising activities within the housing community to raise its budget.² The sum of four thousand dollars was appropriated the agency by the Community Fund. This was not sufficient to conduct program as members of the Committee realized; hence, the residents' council pledged itself to assist the program financially by raising one thousand, nine hundred and twenty dollars in addition to the amount already obtained.³ Also the Chicago Housing

¹ Wentworth Activities Committee, "Cooperation Between the Housing Authority and Private Agency for Use of Community Facility," (Chicago, 1948), p. 1. (Mimeographed.)

² Ibid.

³ Annual Report of the Wentworth Neighborhood Center (Chicago, 1950), p. 2.

Authority contributed three hundred dollars and some supplies.

The agency charged a membership fee which was paid upon registration into the agency's program. The registration fee was twenty-five cents per year for children and fifty cents per year for adults. A family rate of one dollar per year was charged all families registered as a unit.

It was the plan of the board to publicize the work of the agency that they might interest contributors and so begin a fund raising program. The board considered fund raising as a major function of its work.

Program

Grace Community Center, a Group Work and Recreation agency, was a member of the Federation of Settlements and Neighborhood Centers of Chicago, the Welfare Council of Metropolitan Chicago, and the Community Fund of Chicago. Grace Community Center was itself an extension program of the Grace Presbyterian Church of Chicago. In entering its relationship with Chicago Housing Authority it made specific agreements concerning the program to be conducted. They were as follows:

1. The agency shall agree to conduct a recreational and educational program that meets the standards set by the Council of Social Agencies of Chicago, or such other accredited bodies with which the agencies may be affiliated either on a local or national level.
2. The agency shall agree to encourage and welcome the participation of all public and private health and welfare agencies in the program and to actively seek the assistance and cooperation of agencies who do not operate in the speciality of the administering agency.
3. The agency shall agree to encourage and provide for resident participation in the planning and execution of program. The agency shall establish an advisory committee for the special purpose of carrying out this function.
4. The agency shall agree to furnish the Chicago Housing Authority with such statistics and reports as may be requested.
5. The agency shall agree to build its program content of such a nature that it will not exclude any tenant or resident of

- the general community because of race, nationality, or religious convictions.
6. The Chicago Housing Authority shall agree to refer all requests of individuals, groups or the Authority itself, for permission to use any community facility to the agency for clearance.
 7. The Chicago Housing Authority shall agree not to foster programs of its own through its own personnel or to invite other agencies to do so without clearance, discussion and resolution with the operating agency.¹

The program of the Wentworth Neighborhood Center was a group work and recreation type being divided into three main areas: children, teen-agers, and adults. The children's program included a pre-school group whose ages ranged from two to five years; the primaries were the children from six to eight years of age; the juniors were the children from nine to twelve years of age. Activities for these groups included story telling, arts and crafts, games, trips and parties.

The teen-age program considered the breakdown of young teens who were those children from twelve to fifteen years old. Those children over fifteen years were considered older teens. This program was composed of club groups; special interest groups, such as modern dance, a choral and dramatic group, a sewing and knitting group which had to be dropped due to lack of staff; mass activities, such as games, dances; and a teen-age council. This council was composed of representatives from all of the club groups in the teen-age program. Its function was to coordinate activities of that program, plan program for the teen-age group, and work with the Residents' Council in planning agency-wide programs. The teen-age group was the largest group in the agency.

¹

Wentworth Activities Committee, "Cooperation between the Housing Authority and Private Agency for Use of Community Facilities," (Chicago, 1948), pp. 1-2. (Mimeographed.)

The Residents' Council, district council, mothers club, sewing group, and the adult education class sponsored by the Board of Education were the activities of adults in the center. One night a week was set aside for adult recreation. The sewing class, a most active group, sponsored a "family night" affair. Members of the group brought their entire family for a night of fun. This idea of having family participation in the recreation program was one of the pillars upon which the center was established. So far this particular phase of recreation has not met with much success. The adult program on the whole has not developed as hoped.

Supplementary program included a summer day-camp program. The agency was also engaged in the national programs of Boy Scouts and Campfire Girls. Like other agencies of its kind, Wentworth Neighborhood Center afforded field work training for students from Chicago Teachers College.

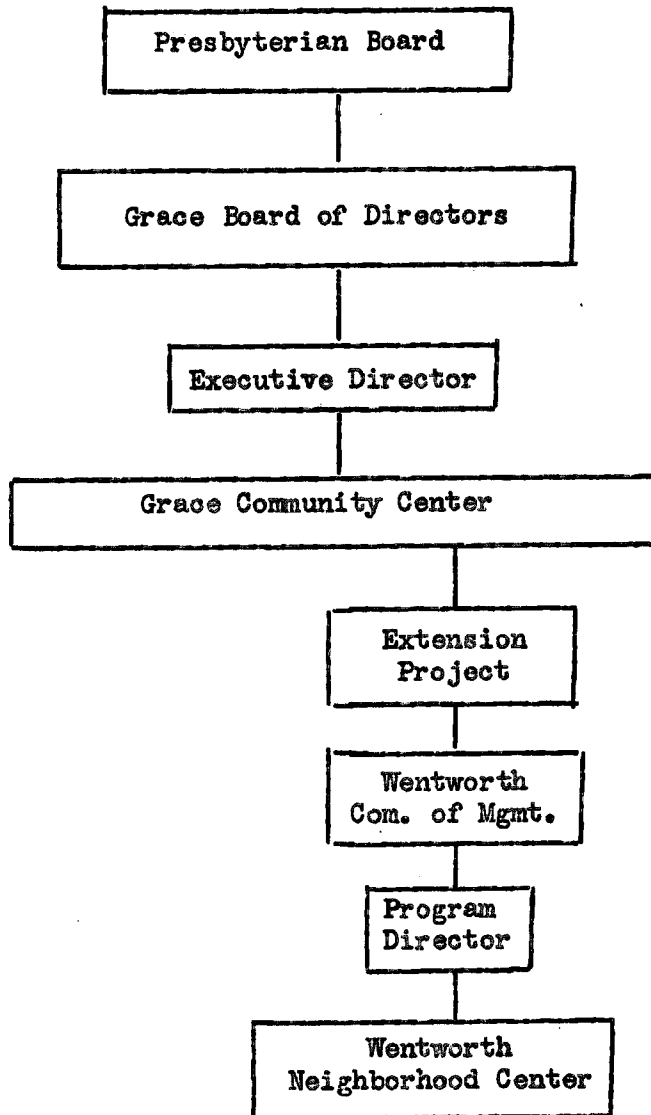
The Board of Education used the recreation room of the center to conduct a section of the nearby elementary school's kindergarten program; also the Chicago Housing Authority conducted a training program for its employees.

Staff

The Director of Grace Center was appointed director of Wentworth Center. A full-time program director was hired along with other part-time employees. The Program Director and other staff members were responsible to the Director, who was in turn responsible for Grace Center Board of Directors and Wentworth Committee of Management. This arrangement caused the staff to be composed of all part-time workers except the Program Director.

Besides paid staff, Wentworth Center had a substantial number of volunteers, many of whom were residents of the project.

STRUCTURE OF WENTWORTH NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER
IN RELATION TO GRACE COMMUNITY CENTER



CHAPTER V

THE FIRST YEAR OF FUNCTIONING

Problems Faced

The first year's function of the Wentworth Neighborhood Center was one of testing, for indeed the extension project was looked upon by the participating agencies as an experiment.¹ It seemed useful to record the significant experiences encountered during that first year in terms of the general problems faced in conducting the community center, and residents' reaction to the program.

The Center's program suffered serious handicaps in its early stage. Within its year of functioning, three managers had served the housing project and three program directors had administered programs. A gun battle between two boys' gangs: one gang from the project, and the other from outside the community ensued. The program unprepared for a large enrollment of teen-agers had to quickly readjust itself to meet that pressing need.² Shortly before the close of the year, the somewhat inactive Residents' Council became totally inactive.

As might be expected, the largest percentage of enrollees of the Center were children and teen-agers. The most recent figures indicated that approximately 442 teen-agers, and 201 children under thirteen were regis-

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Interview with Helen Fritz (Adviser to Management, Chicago Housing Authority, Chicago, Illinois, February 7, 1951).

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Interview with Ruth Wiles (Director of Grace Community Center and Wentworth Neighborhood Center, Chicago, Illinois, November 9, 1950).

tered in the program. Figures for adults showed that between eighty-six and ninety-five had enrolled at the beginning of the first year of operation. However, that attendance steadily fell off. The most recent number of adults enrolled was forty-five. It is necessary to point out here that where, in some cases, registration figures may be fairly reliable in obtaining the attendance picture of children, they are not as reliable in the case of adult groups. In many cases, the special interest adult groups find the formality of registration difficult to remember. In this particular center one of the most active groups had not registered formally into the agency. However, a principle inherent in the establishment of the center was that of recreation for the family as a unit; that idea did not see reality. Adults on the whole participated to a very small degree.

The agency was totally unprepared for the tremendous influx of the teen-agers. It had anticipated a program geared to playground activities of smaller children. It was necessary to plan additional programs and secure more volunteer leaders to assist in serving that group.

Another problem faced by the center was that of staff turnover. The first program director resigned the position in mid-year to accept another. This created some anxiety for a time; however, another director was secured. This appointment proved disastrous in its effect upon the center's public relations with the project community. During the administration of the second program director, there was some misappropriation of funds. Residents held the program director directly responsible for the incident. That incident, plus an already established attitude concerning the misconduct of the children at the center, created an atmosphere of mistrust and disgust. The "shooting" incident which occurred prior to the misappro-

priation of funds had its repercussions also. A final blow was the disintegration of the Residents' Council. The Council as discussed earlier was a most important component of the over-all program. Its disintegration contributed to its inability to maintain its pledges of cooperation to the program. The Council raised two hundred dollars of the one thousand, nine hundred and twenty dollars pledged.

Program activities, nevertheless, continued. A new Program Director was secured. The situation was of grave concern to the sponsoring agencies.

Residents' Reaction to Program

Of the twenty-two persons interviewed, three were men, the others were women. Two persons refused to answer questions: one on the basis of not knowing anything about the Center, the other on the basis of knowing all about it, but of being no longer interested. Six persons and their children attended the Center. Seven persons gave the reason of being "too busy" for their non-attendance at the Center. One person stated that she had been disappointed in a program she attended at the Center. She had been told that a well-known disc-jockey would appear on the program, but he was not on the program. Two persons stated that their children were too young to attend the activities at the Center and they themselves had never thought of attending. Another two persons had their children enrolled in outside programs previous to the establishment of the Center in the project. They had not moved them from these agencies. One person stated that she was not interested in the type of program conducted; while another stated that she and her children were members, but that she found it impossible to keep up with the financial requirements of the activities. This per-

son indicated hostility which appeared to be centered around finances. Another person stated that meetings at the Center always conflicted with an evening class she attended.

To gain some knowledge as to what the attitude toward program was, questions were asked in relation to the residents' understanding of the cooperation between the housing authority and Grace Community Center; their understanding of the purpose of the program, their likes and dislikes of program. Eight persons felt that they understood the cooperation very much; ten felt that they did not understand it at all; two persons felt that they understood "a little." With reference to understanding the program and its purpose, nine persons understood the purpose of the Center only "a little"; seven persons understood it very much; two did not understand it at all; two did not know anything about the Center. The activity of greatest interest was sewing. One person objected to the dances which were held at the Center. All persons felt that the Center was of value to the community; eleven persons considered it their responsibility to assist the program financially. Sixteen persons were satisfied with the community center's location within the housing project. The others did not express their opinions.

Since the Community Center was established with the understanding that its services were available to neighborhood persons as well as project residents, the question, "Has the Center helped you to make new friends from the neighborhood" was asked. One person interviewed had made friends from the neighborhood. One interviewee stated that she had not made friends from the neighborhood, but had made more friends among the residents.

Persons interviewed felt that several additional activities would be helpful. Foremost was the need of a workshop for boys. Skating was next. Several persons interviewed felt that more skating activities would be useful because many of the children regularly patronized the Skating Rink on 63rd Street near South Parkway. Sewing, cooking, and knitting classes were mentioned as activities useful for the teen-age girls. The nearby St. George's School did not offer a course in Home Economics. A well-baby clinic, a day nursery, and a bible class were further additions desired.

From the small sample, it can be concluded that most persons knew of the existence of the Community Center; most persons considered it of value to the community and were satisfied with its location within the project. Similarly, most persons did not clearly understand the purpose of the community center, nor did they understand the cooperation between the Housing Management and Grace Community Center. The majority of the persons interviewed were not members of the community center nor did they attend any of its functions.

The significant problems encountered during the year of operation have been discussed; likewise, some reactions of the residents to the program have been indicated. It seemed logical then to complete the story of the development of the Community Center by recording what was done to handle the problems which arose.

How the Problems Were Met

As previously indicated, teen-agers and children dominated the community center. The influx of teen-agers though unprepared for was an indication of the dire need for recreation facilities in the area. The agen-

cy was able to procure the assistance of more volunteer workers. The children's and teen-age programs continued to grow. Seven club groups were unable to be accommodated due to lack of staff and insufficient space within the Center.

It is no uncommon situation to discover difficulties in recruiting adult groups into an agency. Many agencies face that problem. The concern for adult participation in the program here was most important, however, in its relation to the existed feelings of residents toward the Center. The occurrence of several unfortunate incidents were not helpful to the public relations of a new agency. The disintegration of the Residents' Council was a serious issue and was indicative of some undercurrent. Both Management and the personnel of the Center recognized this and agreed that some action should be taken.

The situation was discussed in a meeting of the project Manager, the president of the Residents' Council and the Director of the Wentworth Neighborhood Center. Out of this meeting it was learned that residents were not satisfied with the kind of program; they felt that it did not give them the opportunity to get together as they did before the Center was established. Again residents considered the conduct of the children, even at the time they were at the Center, was considerably below standard. Lastly, residents were concerned about the expenditures of funds. They felt that they were cheated by the former program director.¹ Out of that meeting, a mass meeting of tenants was called. The following was discussed

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Files of the Wentworth Neighborhood Center, Chicago Housing Authority, Chicago, Illinois, March, 1947 - December, 1950.

at that meeting: the functions and scope of the Residents' Council beyond the activities which were a part of the Center's program; the purpose of the Center and the ways in which residents might participate in activities and in program planning; reorganization and reactivation of the Residents' Council. Residents present agreed that reorganization of the Council should take place and began to do so.

Shortly afterwards another meeting was held for the purpose of evaluating the Center's year of operation and was composed of those persons who were responsible for the development of the Center. The conclusion drawn at that meeting was stated thus: "Despite the various obstacles, the center through joint cooperation had achieved remarkable success."¹ The following recommendations were made:

1. In view of the Residents' Council's reorganization, it should be utilized as soon as possible as an organ for interpretation of the Center's purpose and program to residents of the project.
2. The Residents' Council be given responsibilities that were realistic in terms of its resources, and that those responsibilities as well as rights of the organization be clarified in terms of its relationship to the center.
3. That a real need existed for an appraisal of the recreation needs of the broader Wentworth community, so that programs could be more effectively developed.
4. That serious consideration be given to the means of including the non-project community in planning of the Center's activities, in taking responsibilities for its success, and in participating fully in the program.
5. That the budget of the Center be evaluated with consideration of responsibility which the Residents' Council was asked to assume; the advisability of continuing the canteen, and other sources of finance.²

The Wentworth Neighborhood Center in its year of operation has had its obstacles, but has nevertheless provided recreation activities in an

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Ibid.

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Files of the Wentworth Neighborhood Center, Chicago Housing Authority, Chicago, Illinois, March, 1947 - December, 1950.

area which lacked them. This was evidenced by the influx of teen-age children. The unfortunate incidents of Administration can not be overlooked; however, the recommendations of the Evaluation Meeting indicated that Wentworth Activities Committee recognized its optimism in its initial planning. The Center entered its second year with the experience of the past year and the clearly stated recommendations.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The particular focus of the study was upon inter-agency cooperation to meet a specific need. Chicago Housing Authority recognized its limitations in supplying recreational facilities for its residents and called for the assistance of the Welfare Council, the coordinating agency for social agencies in that city. Consultants from the Welfare Council defined the problem and interpreted the function of the council in serving unmet needs. The programs of several agencies in the vicinity were outlined in an effort to make known available services to those seeking assistance. With that knowledge obtained, the Residents' Council of Wentworth Garden Homes established relations with, and secured, the extension services of Grace Community Center in the concrete form of Wentworth Neighborhood Center. The Wentworth Neighborhood Center had been in operation one year when this study began. Some conclusions which grew out of the study were:

1. The Chicago Housing Authority recognized its limitation in providing a balanced life for its residents; and, in calling for assistance from other agencies indicated that provisions for services of community relations within a housing project should not be the sole responsibility of the authority, but should be shared jointly by the authority and other agencies in the community.
2. The coordinating agency enabled the authority to establish relationships with other agencies out of which grew the relationship with Grace Community Center.
3. Grace Community Center recognized that its objectives in the

broader sense were similar to those of the Authority and agreed to work with the Authority.

4. For effective functioning in the cooperation specific written agreements were felt necessary by the agencies concerned. These agreements defined the specific responsibilities and functions of each agency.
5. Joint representation was needed for joint planning; likewise, joint representation was needed in performing functions.
6. The role of the Residents' Council in terms of its relation to the program of the Center was not clearly defined in the over-all planning. That group felt usurped of power, became resentful of the program, and, lax in responsibilities heretofore assumed.
7. The failure to clarify the role of the Residents' Council resulted in the failure to discover some real interests of the people that might have proved helpful to program.
8. Certain unforeseen incidents which occurred in Administration, and which were likely to occur in any agency, were greatly magnified due to the already established resentment toward the Center.
9. The cooperating agencies recognized the existence of the resentment of the Council and upon discussing the situation learned the nature and reason of the resentment. Plans were made to interpret the Agency's program to the Council, to learn more of the program interests of residents, and to integrate Council members in program planning.
10. The Wentworth Neighborhood Center has helped in meeting the recreation needs of the children and teen-agers of the area.
11. Further interpretation of program and investigation of interest

was needed within the community at large and the project community so that the Center might function more as a neighborhood center and not as a center for the project community exclusively.

The cooperative efforts of the agencies were geared toward the specific need of providing recreation facilities in an unserved area. Wentworth Neighborhood Center was the result of those cooperative efforts. The process of establishing and administering the center was not a simple one. Procedures had to be followed and problems in administration, many of them entirely unexpected, were encountered and dealt with. Recreation, however, was provided. The relationship between the agencies was one of understanding; each having a genuine interest in a common cause. Despite the problems faced, the agencies expressed the feeling of success in their efforts and felt that their past experiences would serve profitable to their future functioning.

APPENDIX

SCHEDULE TO DISCOVER THE EFFECT OF THE ESTABLISHED
COMMUNITY CENTER ON THE NEIGHBORHOOD

1. Do you go to the Community Center? Yes _____ No _____
2. Do your children to to the Center? Yes _____ No _____
3. How often do you attend the Center?
Not at all _____, frequently _____, very much _____
4. Why don't you attend the Center?
 - a. lack of interest _____
 - b. dislike of program _____
 - c. too far _____
 - d. too busy _____
5. Do you like the type of program conducted at the Center?
Not at all _____, a little _____, very much _____
6. Do you understand the purpose and program of the Center?
Not at all _____, a little _____, very much _____
7. Do you understand the cooperation between Grace Center and Management of the project in operating the center?
Not at all _____, a little _____, very much _____
8. What part of the center's program do you like best?
 - a. sewing _____
 - b. club groups _____
 - c. family night _____
 - d. dances _____
9. What part of the Center's program do you like less?
 - a. sewing _____
 - b. club groups _____
 - c. family night _____
 - d. dances _____
10. Has the Center helped you to make new friends from the neighborhood?
Yes _____ No _____
11. Do you think the program of the Center of value to the community?
Yes _____ No _____
12. Do you think the Community Center should be located in the project space as it is now or somewhere else in the neighborhood:
In neighborhood _____ In Project _____
13. What activities would you like to see added to the Center's program?

14. Do you consider it your responsibility to help support the Center financially? Yes _____ No _____

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